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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of the parents of 1992 and 1993 baccalaureate graduates who were enrolled for more than eight regular academic year semesters before earning their degrees. Approximately 350 students were included as graduates from a major, public research university in the Southeast. Parents were selected as the research subjects because they want their children to have the most positive college experience possible, but they also have limited resources and want their children to finish their degree. Responses were received from 200 parents of graduates from a major public research university in the Southeast. Parents indicated that the predominant reason why their children took longer than 4 years to graduate was "changing majors," while the second highest item was "felt no pressure to finish in 4 years," followed closely by "courses needed to graduate not always available" and "had to work while enrolled." Ninety-two percent of the parents were satisfied with the quality of education. Data were evaluated for differences by race, sex, and residency status (in-state and out-of-state). The study found that parents felt their children, for the most part, had academically sound reasons for taking longer than 4 years to graduate. A copy of the questionnaire and some parent comments are appended. (JDD)

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PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS'

TIME TO DEGREE

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Parents' Perceptions of Students' Time to Degree

ABSTRACT: This paper presents the results of a survey of the parents of 1992 and 1993 baccalaureate graduates who were enrolled for more than eight academic year semesters before earning their degrees. Approximately 350 students were included as graduates from a major, public, research university in the Southeast. The major question addressed to the parents was why their daughter or son took longer than four years to complete their program. While there are a number of legitimate academic reasons for not finishing "on-time," increasing budgetary pressures in many states are focusing attention on this group of students who seem to be taking too long to graduate. Asking parents for their perceived reasons provides a secondary source of information in addition to students themselves.

AIR

for Management Research, Policy Analysis, and Planning

This paper was presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at The New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 29, 1994 - June 1, 1994. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Jean Endo
Editor
Forum Publications

Parents' Perceptions of Students' Time to Degree

The issue of how long it takes students to earn their baccalaureate degrees is more and more of interest these days. Legislators in many states across the country are asking why they need to pay for more than four years of college for students to get "four year" degrees; mothers and fathers are also concerned about the extended financial commitment of college; and, educators are even looking at three year degrees to get students into the job market quicker (Starr, 1993). With all this emphasis on getting the degree and getting out of college, there is another side to the debate which focuses on the value of the educational process to the student. Under the liberal arts umbrella, college should be a time of experimentation for the student, of trying psychology and sociology, geology and geography, Spanish and Italian, etc. Similarly, the choice of major needs to be done in a thoughtful way which gives the student time to consider career options, personal abilities, etc. Of course both experimentation with courses and choice of major can be extended indefinitely, but one can also rush through college in four years and end up with a degree in a field in which one really does not have much interest.

Statement of the Problem

As noted in the introduction, postsecondary education in the United States is being pressed on the issue of students taking longer than four years to earn a four-year degree (Kramer, 1993). In all likelihood this is another part of the accountability movement which has swept the nation over the past five years, but it also may be a result of the federal Student-Right-To-Know legislation that required, as of July 1, 1993, all colleges and universities to publish their graduation rates. Rather quickly, large amounts of data are available nationally that lets everyone see how students are doing in college.

On the other hand college is a time of personal growth, exploration, and value formation. Many college students are away from their family and on their own for the

first time, and they must learn to manage their time, build social relationships, and narrow career options as well as "get an education." The idea that all of this can be accomplished in four years for large numbers of students may not be realistic if, in fact, there is any support for the notion that college is a time of growth and exploration.

The purpose of this research is to see what perceptions parents may have about the length of time their daughters or sons are taking to earn a college degree. Parents were selected as the research subjects because they sit on both sides of the fence; that is, they want their children to have the most positive college experience possible, but they also have limited resources and want the kids to get on with it and finish that degree.

One might argue that a more direct approach would be to ask the students themselves directly, and that is being done in some separate research being conducted concurrently. However, one should question whether students will provide a completely accurate picture of their experiences. Is their search for a major field, for example, truly a question of narrowing interests through the exploration of many fields or merely the result of a juvenile mind searching for utopia while postponing the inevitable hard choice? Surveys of students will not answer questions like this completely, so another source of information, the parents, is used. While there is no doubt that parents' responses to the question of why their children took longer than four years to graduate will not be completely accurate either, their responses do provide another set of information with which to study the issue.

Literature Review

While no other research has been located which surveyed parents on their perceptions of students' time to degree, three studies were found which looked at reasons students gave for taking longer than four years to graduate. The first of these studies is a report from the Center for Education Statistics (Hill and Owings, 1986), "Completion Time for Bachelor's Degrees." This study compared students who completed their

baccalaureate degrees in four years to those graduates who took longer than four years using a variety of characteristics such as aptitude test scores, socioeconomic status, region of high school, and high school curriculum. The population used in the study was part of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 and the sample consisted of those students who had received a bachelor's degree by December 1984.

The study found nearly 51 percent of the sample population of 4,440 graduates took longer than four years to graduate, but that 75 percent of the sample did graduate within five years after completing high school. Comparison characteristics showed students who were female from the Northeast, had scored in the top quartile of the aptitude test, had a high socioeconomic status, and had followed a college preparatory high school curriculum were much more likely to graduate within four years. The student's major while in college also seemed to affect the likelihood of graduating within four years as more students who majored in social sciences, mathematics, and the sciences tended to graduate in four years than students who majored in business and engineering. Students who took longer than four years to receive a baccalaureate degree indicated the need to work part-time, enrollment in five year programs, changing majors, transferring to other institutions, and stopping out as reasons for the longer length of time it took them to complete their degrees.

Oscar Porter (1989) of the National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities completed the second study, "Undergraduate Completion and Persistence at Four-Year Colleges and Universities: Completers, Persisters, Stopouts and Dropouts." The 28,000 high school seniors in 1980 included in the High School and Beyond study formed the population for this report. Although the author did not directly address the issue of why some students take longer than four years to graduate, he did note "the four year bachelor's degree is a thing of the past for the vast majority of students." (p. 4) His study found that only 15.5 percent of all students in the sample population had completed their bachelor's degree within four years. Independent universities and colleges seem to

have a better track record in graduating their students within six years than public institutions but public university students persisted longer in the effort to achieve their degree than independent institution students.

The last study, "Time to Degree in California's Public Universities. Factors Contributing to the Length of Time Undergraduates Take to Earn their Bachelor's Degree," completed by the California State Postsecondary Education Commission (1988) is probably the most relevant to this paper. This study was requested by the California State Legislature in Supplemental Language to the Budget Act of 1987. Both state higher education systems, the University of California and the California State University, were asked to survey students to determine how a variety of factors may have influenced the time it took them to earn their degrees. Students graduating within the traditional four year period as well as those who had take longer were included in the survey.

The responding students indicated several factors which seemed to have had the greatest influence on their time to degree. Nearly two thirds of the students surveyed mentioned taking extra courses out of interest as having some influence on their time to degree. Nearly sixty percent also mentioned changing majors and having to work as important factors in taking more than four years to graduate. Carrying a reduced courseload, the need for better advising, and having trouble getting major requirements when needed round off the list of most influential factors. The Commission's report specifically notes the relationship between having to work and taking a reduced courseload. The report also noted that transfer students, even those transferring between institutions in the University systems, were more likely to experience delay in graduating in four years than non-transfer students.

While taking extra courses for pleasure or interest was cited most often to explain why students took longer than four years to complete their degrees, the number of credit hours earned by these students was not noticeably higher than those students who graduated in four years. The report calls for more analysis in order to reconcile this

apparent contradiction. One explanation may lie in the description of a "successful" student, one who graduates within the traditional four years. Most often, this seems to be a student of high ability who has received college credit for courses taken in high school, never fails or repeats a course, and does not change majors.

The commission's report also briefly discusses the additional costs associated with students taking more than four years to complete their degrees. The University asserts that if a student takes a reduced courseload and needs five rather than four years to graduate, the state incurs no additional instructional cost because the University is funded on the number of academic credits generated by the students. However, the Commission notes that there are costs incurred as a result of greater capital needs for the larger number of students on campus as well as the foregone income taxes of students taking another year to finish their degrees.

Both the report on the California systems and the federal report on completion times share certain conclusions. Students of high ability who have been well prepared for college and do not change majors will usually complete their degrees within the traditional four year span. Students who take more than four years to complete their degrees have changed majors or transferred institutions, have repeated courses because of low grades or failures, and have taken additional courses for interest.

The Data

This study used a mail survey of the parents of 159 baccalaureate graduates in the spring of 1992 who entered the same university as freshmen prior to fall 1988, and 156 parents of the 1993 graduating class who entered before 1989. All students whose parents were included were enrolled for more than eight regular academic year semesters before graduating and had not majored in one of the programs that requires more than four years to complete; the entire population was surveyed. The university is a major, public, research institution with a total enrollment of over 20,000 in the southeastern

United States. Simultaneously, the state system of which the study university is a part, was surveying a sample of the spring 1992 graduates with a portion of that survey devoted to reasons the students may have had for taking longer than four years to graduate (if they did).

After two mailings to the parents, 200 responses were received for a 63.5% response rate; 96 were from the 1993 parents, 88 were from the 1992 parents, and 16 could not be assigned a year. The questionnaire was designed in house and contained thirteen questions plus a space for comments filling both sides of one page (copy in appendix). Parents were asked to indicate the reasons their children took more than four years to graduate; the primary reason for extended enrollment; whether their children had changed majors, taken a double major, gone to summer school, or been enrolled part-time; and, demographics such as race, sex, and residency status. Also, parents were asked to rate the quality of education their son or daughter received and if they would send their child to the same university if they had to choose again.

The Findings

Parents said the predominant reason why their children took longer than four years to graduate was *Changing majors*. As shown in Table 1, 55.5% of responding parents listed *Changed majors* while the second highest item with 24.5% was *Felt no pressure to finish in four years,* followed closely by *Courses needed to graduate not always available* (22.5%) and *Had to work while enrolled* (21.5%). Differences in responses between the 1993 and 1992 parents were minimal and are not presented here.

Differences by race, sex, and residency status (in-state or out-of-state for tuition purposes) were also explored, and there were some differences. *Changed major* was still the main reason for students taking longer than four years to graduate and this held true for men and women, for African-Americans, Whites, and Other races, and for residents and non-residents of the state. There were differences, though, in the percentage of

parents who listed *Changed majors* as shown in Tables 2 - 4. For example, 63.8% of the parents of female students listed *Changed major* but only 46.1% of male students did. Additional differences were evident, also, in the other reasons parents listed after *Changed major*. Parents of non-residents, for example in Table 4, listed *Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load* as equally important as *Changed major* while parents of the state residents ranked *Felt no pressure to finish in four years* as second highest and the *Athletics* reason came in tenth in importance.

To further refine the reasons parents gave, they were asked to list the one, primary reason their children had taken more than four years to graduate; these responses are shown in Tables 5 - 8. Once again, *Changed major* was the single most important reason when all the parents' responses are considered together. As Table 5 shows, 24% of the parents listed *Changed major* as the primary reason, followed by *Other* (13.5% - a wide assortment!), by *Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load* (9.0%), etc. However, *Changed major* was not always the primary reason when the parents were divided by race, sex, and residency status. Parents of females (37.2%), Whites (25.6%), and state residents (27.1%) did list *Changed major* as the primary reason, but males was *Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required lighter load* (13.7%), African-Americans was *Other* (21.4%), Other races was six reasons all with one vote, and non-residents was *Athletics* (25.0%) like the males.

What was not seen particularly, though, were either reasons that might have been caused by the university, such as *Poor Academic Advising* or *Courses needed to graduate not always available*, or reasons that suggested the students were not graduating "on schedule" because of their own slothfulness or inertia. This latter might have been indicated if higher ratings had been shown for *Felt no pressure to finish in four years* or *Unable to focus sufficiently on academics*. The results were mildly surprising in that *Took additional courses for interest* was not rated more importantly. Not only did the California survey show this as the most important reason among their students, but one

might conceptually imagine that a strong liberal arts environment (such as the study university) would almost encourage such experimentation across the various disciplines.

The last results from the survey included in this paper address the two questions in the survey which asked parents: 1) if they had it to do over again, would they still send their child to the same university; and, 2) how satisfied they were with the quality of education their child received at the university. As shown in Table 9, parents were pretty certain they would send their child to the same university if they had it to do over again. When all parents responding were considered together, 71.5% said they absolutely would send their child again and 16.5% said they probably would (total 88% positive). All categories of parents (sex, race, and residency) showed similar results with over 70% saying absolutely except for the parents of African-Americans who were 64.3% absolutely sure and 28.6% probably sure. Interestingly enough, though, the total of absolutely and probably for the African-American parents is 92.9% which is the highest positive rating of any of the groups even though the percentage indicating absolutely was lower.

On the second question rating the quality of education, similar positive results were found as Table 10 shows. When all parents are considered together, the responses were 56% very satisfied and 36% satisfied for a total of 92%. All the separate categories showed similar responses except for the parents of African-American students who showed 35.7% very satisfied and 64.3% satisfied. But, in similar fashion to their responses on the previous question, the parents of African-American students had a total positive rating (100%) that was higher than any of the other groups.

In attempting to look at possible differences between satisfied and unsatisfied students in their reasons for taking longer than four years to graduate, the parents' responses on primary reasons for taking longer than four years were tabulated separately for the parents who expressed positive and negative ratings on these last two questions. No usable results were found, however, since the preponderance of parents were on the

positive side in both the question of sending your child again and the question rating the quality of the university.

Summary and Conclusion

The major impetus for doing this study was to explore the reasons parents gave for why their children took longer than four years to earn their college degrees. More specifically, the study was designed to see if parents felt their sons or daughters took longer than four years for good or justified reasons. Basically, the results do show that parents felt their children, for the most part, took longer than four years for academically sound reasons. *Changing major* was clearly the single most listed reason with *working part-time* and *involvement in extra-curricular activities* also listed. Many of the comments which parents added to their surveys reinforced this positive aspect of having gotten a good education as the sound basis for starting a career, and the length of time it took to accomplish this was of secondary importance. A few comments from parents are included in the Appendix.

On the other hand parents did express some feeling that their children were not in any great rush to graduate. *Felt no pressure to finish in four years* was the second most frequently checked reason by the parents as nearly one in four said this was a factor. However, when listing just the primary reason, only 3.5% chose this one. These results may indicate, then, that while the student was in no particular hurry to graduate, it was other reasons such as *changing majors* that caused the delay. Pressure on students to finish in four years might do nothing more than to get them out into the real world more quickly, but one also has to worry that such pressure might cause society to miss out on the brilliant brain surgeon who could not take the time to switch majors to biology or the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist who just never had the time for that creative writing course.

To conclude, the problem of how long it should take college students to earn

their degrees is a complex one as are most questions relating to human behavior. There is not doubt that some students dally a bit on the way to their degree and probably they are wasting taxpayers' dollars as well as those of their parents. But, the clear direction of the findings of this research points towards serious students using college resources to further their education while preparing for a future career - - at least, that is what their parents are saying.

Table 1

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Overall Distribution
(SAMPLE =200)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	111	55.5%
2.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	49	24.5%
3.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	45	22.5%
4.	k. Had to work while enrolled	43	21.5%
5.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	39	19.5%
6.	e. Poor academic advising	37	18.5%
7.	c. Graduation requirement of major	36	18.0%
8.	h. Took additional courses for interest	35	17.5%
9.	p. Other personal reasons	33	16.5%
10.	s. Other	33	16.5%
11.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	23	11.5%
12.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	21	10.5%
13.	b. Repeated courses to make better grades	20	10.0%
14.	g. Took light load to keep GPA high	14	7.0%
15.	m. Insufficient financial aid	13	6.5%
16.	o. Unable to handle heavier load	10	5.0%
17.	l. Did not enroll for one or more semesters to earn money	6	3.0%
18.	n. Family responsibilities	1	0.5%
19.	f. Lost credits from transfer institution	1	0.5%

Table 2

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Females
(SAMPLE =94)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	60	63.8%
2.	k. Had to work while enrolled	19	20.2%
3.	c. Graduation requirement of major	18	19.1%
4.	s. Other	17	18.1%
5.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	17	18.1%
6.	e. Poor academic advising	14	14.9%
7.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	14	14.9%
8.	h. Took additional courses for interest	14	14.9%
9.	p. Other personal reasons	14	14.9%
10.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	9	9.6%

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Males
(SAMPLE =102)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	47	46.1%
2.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	34	33.3%
3.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	32	31.4%
4.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	26	25.5%
5.	k. Had to work while enrolled	23	22.5%
6.	e. Poor academic advising	22	21.6%
7.	h. Took additional courses for interest	21	20.6%
8.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	17	16.7%
9.	c. Graduation requirement of major	17	16.7%
10.	p. Other personal reasons	17	16.7%

Table 3

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Whites
(SAMPLE =176)

Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1. a. Changed Major	96	54.5%
2. q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	42	23.9%
3. d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	40	22.7%
4. k. Had to work while enrolled	37	21.0%
5. i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter loa	36	20.5%
6. e. Poor academic advising	33	18.8%
7. h. Took additional courses for interest	33	18.8%
8. c. Graduation requirement of major	32	18.2%
9. s. Other	30	17.0%
10. p. Other personal reasons	27	15.3%

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for African-Americans
(SAMPLE =14)

Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1. a. Changed Major	7	50.0%
2. p. Other personal reasons	4	28.6%
3. k. Had to work while enrolled	4	28.6%
4. g. Took light load to keep GPA high	3	21.4%
5. q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	3	21.4%
6. s. Other	3	21.4%
7. c. Graduation requirement of major	3	21.4%
8. d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	2	14.3%
9. i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter loa	2	14.3%
10. e. Poor academic advising	2	14.3%

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Others
(SAMPLE =10)

Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1. a. Changed Major	8	80%
2. q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	4	40%
3. d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	3	30%
4. k. Had to work while enrolled	2	20%
5. r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	2	20%
6. e. Poor academic advising	2	20%
7. p. Other personal reasons	2	20%
8. l. Did not enroll for one or more semesters to earn money	1	10%
9. j. Internship, independent study, etc.	1	10%
10. h. Took additional courses for interest	1	10%

Table 4

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Residents
(SAMPLE =167)

Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1. a. Changed Major	95	56.9%
2. q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	42	25.1%
3. d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	37	22.2%
4. k. Had to work while enrolled	35	21.0%
5. e. Poor academic advising	29	17.4%
6. h. Took additional courses for interest	28	16.8%
7. c. Graduation requirement of major	27	16.2%
8. p. Other personal reasons	26	15.6%
9. s. Other	26	15.6%
10. i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	25	15.0%

PARENTS SURVEY
REASONS WHY STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Non-Residents
(SAMPLE = 31)

Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1. a. Changed Major	14	45.2%
2. i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	14	45.2%
3. c. Graduation requirement of major	8	25.8%
4. h. Took additional courses for interest	7	22.6%
5. q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	7	22.6%
6. k. Had to work while enrolled	7	22.6%
7. s. Other	7	22.6%
8. e. Poor academic advising	7	22.6%
9. d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	6	19.4%
10. p. Other personal reasons	6	19.4%

Table 5

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Overall Distribution
(SAMPLE =200)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	48	24.0%
2.	s. Other	27	13.5%
3.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	18	9.0%
4.	e. Poor academic advising	11	5.5%
5.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	9	4.5%
6.	c. Graduation requirement of major	8	4.0%
7.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	7	3.5%
8.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	7	3.5%
9.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	7	3.5%
10.	k. Had to work while enrolled	6	3.0%

Table 6

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Females
(SAMPLE =94)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	35	37.2%
2.	s. Other	15	16.0%
3.	c. Graduation requirement of major	5	5.3%
4.	e. Poor academic advising	5	5.3%
5.	k. Had to work while enrolled	4	4.3%
6.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	4	4.3%
7.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	3	3.2%
8.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	3	3.2%
9.	h. Took additional courses for interest	2	2.1%
10.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	2	2.1%

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Males
(SAMPLE =102)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	14	13.7%
2.	a. Changed Major	13	12.7%
3.	s. Other	12	11.8%
4.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	6	5.9%
5.	e. Poor academic advising	6	5.9%
6.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	6	5.9%
7.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	6	5.9%
8.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	4	3.9%
9.	c. Graduation requirement of major	3	2.9%
10.	p. Other personal reasons	3	2.9%

Table 7

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Whites
(SAMPLE =176)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	45	25.6%
2.	s. Other	23	13.1%
3.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	17	9.7%
4.	e. Poor academic advising	11	6.3%
5.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	8	4.5%
6.	c. Graduation requirement of major	7	4.0%
7.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	7	4.0%
8.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	7	4.0%
9.	k. Had to work while enrolled	6	3.4%
10.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	6	3.4%

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for African-Americans
(SAMPLE =14)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	s. Other	3	21.4%
2.	a. Changed Major	2	14.3%
3.	c. Graduation requirement of major	1	7.1%
4.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	1	7.1%
5.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	1	7.1%
6.	k. Had to work while enrolled	1	7.1%
7.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	0	0.0%
8.	n. Family responsibilities	0	0.0%
9.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	0	0.0%
10.	p. Other personal reasons	0	0.0%

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Others
(SAMPLE =10)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	h. Took additional courses for interest	1	10.0%
2.	s. Other	1	10.0%
3.	o. Unable to handle heavier load	1	10.0%
4.	l. Did not enroll for one or more semesters to earn money	1	10.0%
5.	a. Changed Major	1	10.0%
6.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	1	10.0%
7.	k. Had to work while enrolled	0	0.0%
8.	n. Family responsibilities	0	0.0%
9.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	0	0.0%
10.	p. Other personal reasons	0	0.0%

Table 8

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Residents
(SAMPLE =166)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	a. Changed Major	45	27.1%
2.	s. Other	23	13.9%
3.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	10	6.0%
4.	e. Poor academic advising	9	5.4%
5.	c. Graduation requirement of major	8	4.8%
6.	d. Courses needed to graduate not always available	8	4.8%
7.	j. Internship, independent study, etc.	7	4.2%
8.	k. Had to work while enrolled	6	3.6%
9.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	6	3.6%
10.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	5	3.0%

PARENTS SURVEY
TOP TEN PRIMARY REASONS WHY
STUDENTS TOOK LONGER THAN 4 YRS TO GRADUATE
Distribution for Non-Residents
(SAMPLE =32)

	Reasons	Number of Responses	Percentage of Sample
1.	i. Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load	8	25.0%
2.	s. Other	4	12.5%
3.	a. Changed Major	3	9.4%
4.	e. Poor academic advising	2	6.3%
5.	h. Took additional courses for interest	2	6.3%
6.	q. Felt no pressure to finish in four years	2	6.3%
7.	n. Family responsibilities	1	3.1%
8.	r. Unable to focus sufficiently on academics	1	3.1%
9.	l. Did not enroll for one or more semesters to earn money	1	3.1%
10.	k. Had to work while enrolled	1	3.1%

Table 9

PARENTS SURVEY
IF YOU HAD IT TO DO OVER, WOULD YOU STILL
RECOMMEND THAT YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY

Reasons	Overall Distribution Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =200)*	Female Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =94)*	Male Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =102)*	African-American Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =14)*	White Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =176)*	Residents Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =167)*	Non-Residents Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =31)*
1. Absolutely	71.5%	71.3%	73.5%	64.3%	72.7%	71.3%	77.4%
2. Probably	16.5%	18.1%	14.7%	28.6%	15.9%	16.8%	16.1%
3. I doubt it	8.0%	9.6%	6.9%	0.0%	8.5%	9.0%	3.2%
4. Definitely not	1.5%	1.1%	2.0%	7.1%	2.8%	1.2%	3.2%
5. n/a	2.5%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%

Table 10

PARENTS SURVEY
OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION
YOUR DAUGHTER OR SON RECEIVED AT THE UNIVERSITY

Reasons	Overall Distribution Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =200)*	Female Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =94)*	Male Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =102)*	African-American Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =14)*	White Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =176)*	Residents Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =167)*	Non-Residents Percentage of Sample *(SAMPLE =31)*
1. Very Satisfied	56.0%	56.4%	56.9%	35.7%	59.7%	56.3%	58.1%
2. Satisfied	36.0%	35.1%	37.3%	64.3%	33.0%	36.5%	35.5%
3. Neutral	4.5%	6.4%	2.9%	0.0%	5.1%	4.8%	3.2%
4. Dissatisfied	2.5%	2.1%	2.9%	0.0%	2.3%	2.4%	3.2%
5. Very Dissatisfied	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6. n/a	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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Appendix

Selected comments from parents:

1. There is something about that university community that tends to distract some students from their studies and work their minds. Some students seem to enjoy the social life and delay graduation for that purpose. I sense a lack of effective counseling by Advisors thus permitting students to be indecisive in making Career Choices. Some emphasis should be focused on this issue during recruiting and the admitting process. I an uncertain about the statistics, but I can envision some impact on space if the number are sufficiently light.

2. As stated above, we encourage his extended study. He also took honors courses outside of his major. The University offers a wide range of opportunities and we wanted him to take full advantage of them. We hope the double honors will help him gain admission to graduate school and pave the way for security and learning in the future. It would be stupid to deny good students the opportunity he had.

3. Difficulty obtaining needed courses. However this was not reason for 5th year. Fifth year was taken for courses required for graduate program that she did not realize she wanted to enter until 4th year.

4. My son wished to major in Psychology, do an honors thesis, and fulfill requirement for entrance into medical school. My son also worked part-time during school and full time during summers to support himself. He also changed his major from Biology to Psychology during his sophomore year. I believe if he had been able to attend summer school for one or more years, he could have graduated on time.

5. I feel that his transition from high school to college along with the pressures of athletics was not enabled by the University or his coaches. No matter what anyone thinks, guidance is needed for these 18 year olds, especially when pressures of athletics are heaped on. Better counseling in his freshman year would have made academics better.

6. My daughter found it necessary to drop a statistics course - because the assistant teaching the course was impossible to understand - foreign. She even made a tape recording - played it for her advisor - who agreed completely.

7. The physics curriculum is probably a 5-year program even when begun the freshman year -- I have a Ph.D. in Physics and have chaired a physics department so can evaluate the course requirement.

8. A fabulous five years -- he hates to leave and will probably be back someday!

9. Our son's taking 5 years to graduate was totally unrelated to the quality of education that he received at the university. He started college before he was 18 and went in with advance credits. He changed his major 2 or 3 times but did find a satisfying area of work which he pursued on a part-time basis and took a semester off to work and finalize his resolve in the area.

10. He met a major professor that took a great deal of interest in him during the 3rd year. It turned him around and he became truly interested in learning and not just getting by. His ambition now is to be a college professor and he is now enrolled as a PhD candidate. He needed the 5 years to grow up and although it cost me and the university and the tax payers - it was worth it and will pay off handsomely.

Questionnaire for Parents of Students who Took Longer than Four Years To Complete their Degrees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1) Below are some of the reasons why students take longer than four years to graduate. Please check all that you feel apply to your son or daughter's case.

Academic Reasons:

a.___Changed major
b.___Repeated courses to make better grades
c.___Graduation requirement of major
d.___Courses needed to graduate not always available
e.___Poor academic advising
f.___Lost credits from transfer institution
g.___Took light load to keep GPA high
h.___Took additional courses for interest
i.___Athletics and/or extracurricular activities required a lighter load
j.___Internship, independent study, etc

Financial Reasons:

k.___Had to work while enrolled
l.___Did not enroll for one or more semesters to earn money
m.___Insufficient financial aid

Personal Reasons:

n.___Family responsibilities
o.___Unable to handle heavier load
p.___Other personal reasons

Other Reasons:

q.___Felt no pressure to finish in four years
r.___Unable to focus sufficiently on academics
s.___Other, please specify_____

2) Of the above reasons, please write in the letter of the one which you think was the **primary** reason your daughter or son took longer than four years to graduate:___

SECTION B: ACADEMIC INFORMATION

3) Did your son or daughter graduate with a double major? ___Yes ___No

4) What was your daughter or son's major?_____
And double major if applicable?_____

5) Did your son or daughter change majors during college? ___Yes ___No

6) Did your daughter or son repeat any courses because of failure or low grades? ___Yes ___No

7) Did your son or daughter attend part-time during any semester? (Do not include summers)
___Yes ___No If yes, how many semesters?___

(Continue on back)

8) Please indicate the number of summer semesters your daughter or son attended.
(Note: There are two semesters offered each summer)

___None
___1-2 semesters
___3-4 semesters
___5-6 semesters
___7-8 semesters
___9 or more semesters

SECTION C: SATISFACTION INFORMATION

9) If you had it to do over again, would you still recommend that your son or daughter attend UNC-CH?

___Absolutely
___Probably
___I doubt it
___Definitely not

10) Overall, how satisfied were you with the quality of education your daughter or son received at UNC-CH?

___Very Satisfied
___Satisfied
___Neutral
___Dissatisfied
___Very Dissatisfied

SECTION D: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

11) Please indicate the residency status for tuition purposes of your son or daughter when first enrolled at UNC-CH. ___Resident of NC ___Nonresident

12) Please indicate your daughter or son's ethnic group.

___White
___Hispanic-American
___Asian/Pacific-American
___African-American
___Native American
___Non-Resident Alien

13) Please indicate your child's gender. ___Female ___Male

COMMENTS

14) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your son or daughter's educational experiences at Carolina? If so, please use this space for that purpose or feel free to attach another sheet. Also, any comments you wish to make to help us with this study would be welcome.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your responses. Please return in the envelope provided and remember to put your name in the return-address section of the envelope so that we will know who has responded.